

Overnight stays in the park were essentially unchanged over the period. The anomalous drop in 2001 was likely the result of a recordkeeping issue for campground stays, not a discernible change in visitation patterns. Overnight stays can be divided into four categories: concessioner lodging, National Park Service standard campgrounds, National Park Service group campgrounds, and National Park Service backcountry use. Concessioner lodging decreased in the 16-year period at an estimated -2.4% average annual growth rate. Although use of group campsites declined by over 50% overall during the period, standard campground usage generally held even except for 2001. Finally, overnight backcountry use has oscillated dramatically in the 16 years, but the trend has netted growth of 1.9% average annual growth rate for the 16-year period (NPS 1997).

Monthly Use Patterns

Although Denali National Park and Preserve is open year-round, monthly visitation is strongly seasonal. Nearly all visitor use of the park and preserve occurs during the short summer season (June through August). The shoulder seasons (spring and autumn) are quite short, as the park road usually opens no earlier than mid-May and closes in mid-September. In winter the park is only accessible by dog sled, snowshoes, cross-country skis, and, where permitted, by snowmobile. Weather determines the actual opening and closing dates for the park road.

Table 3-14: Monthly Visitation for Denali National Park and Preserve, 2001.

Month	Recreational Visitors	Percentage	Non-Recreational Visitors	Percentage	Grand Total Visitors	Percentage
January	42	<0.1	12,438	1.6	12,480	1.1
February	252	<0.1	10,722	1.4	10,974	1.0
March	464	0.1	21,248	2.7	21,712	1.9
April	861	0.2	41,552	5.2	42,413	3.7
May	25,020	7.0	120,882	15.3	145,902	12.7
June	89,229	24.8	164,097	20.7	253,326	22.0
July	109,881	30.5	165,162	20.9	275,043	23.9
August	99,768	27.7	128,931	16.3	228,699	19.9
September	34,520	9.6	68,835	8.7	103,355	9.0
October	72	<0.1	24,376	3.0	24,448	2.1
November	66	<0.1	18,574	2.4	18,640	1.6
December	17	<0.1	14,944	1.9	14,961	1.3
Total for Year	360,192	100.0	791,761	100.1	1,151,953	100.2

Note: All measurements are given as the number of people entering the park and preserve during any part of the day.
Source: NPS 1997

Source of Visitors

Denali National Park and Preserve is a destination park with national and international appeal. The park and preserve provide a variety of unique opportunities and experiences for visitors, including Mount McKinley and the outstanding wildlife throughout the park and preserve. People are willing to invest large amounts of time and money to visit the park and preserve. For this reason, the overwhelming majority of visitors to the park come from out-of-state (contiguous 48 states). According to a 1995 survey, 90% of the visitors were from out-of-state. Included in that figure were a significant number of international visitors — 12%, according to the same survey. During the off-season (October through April), the majority of visitor use is by Alaska residents. The severe climate and travel distances involved in accessing Denali National Park and Preserve cause the seasonal shift (NPS 1997).

The time and money factor, in combination with the increase in package tours having Denali National Park and Preserve as a destination, has increased the number of senior citizens visiting the